



POLICY BRIEF | PCB CFS 20-02 CHILD WELFARE REFORM

Florida's child welfare system provides essential services to Florida's most vulnerable kids. **PCB CFS 20-02** aims to make the system more effective by implementing substantial and long-term positive changes.

PCB CFS 20-02 CHILD WELFARE REFORM: improves the state's child welfare system by providing more support for key workers, improving workforce development at every stage in the pipeline, involving community-based organizations, and holding all partners to the same standard.

- Every day, hundreds of Floridians working for the Department of Children and Families (DCF), community-based care agencies, case management organizations, and other partners give their best – in extremely challenging environments – to help the state's abused and neglected kids. This bill outlines several ways to improve the system to better serve the children who need it.
- First, the bill addresses how to **support and retain child protective investigators** (CPIs), who daily work in some of the most stressful environments and make difficult decisions. CPIs respond to allegations of child abuse and neglect within 24 hours and decide whether the child's environment is safe enough to stay in. But turnover for CPIs is almost 50%.
 - Surveys show that CPIs are burning out from workload and secondary trauma, have inadequate supervision and support, and lack opportunities for advancement.
 - The bill increases base pay for CPIs and their supervisors, and calls on DCF to create clear pathways for long-term career success and new programs to prevent burnout.
- Second, the bill creates a strong pipeline of professional child welfare workers by expanding the functions of the Florida Institute for Child Welfare (FICW) beyond research and recommendations.
 - FICW will inform, train, and engage social work students for a successful career in child welfare through a partnership with FSU College of Social Work that gives students hands-on experience. The bill also directs the FICW to design and implement a program for career-long professional support for child welfare workers.
- Third, the bill encourages DCF to **work with faith- and community-based organizations** that help families in crisis before the child welfare system gets involved.
 - The bill helps connect these organizations with community-based care lead agencies (CBCs) to ensure they are available to families in need. It also lets businesses that contribute to approved nonprofit organizations receive a tax credit.
 - These nonprofits provide valuable services at no cost to the state. Their involvement can reduce DCF's workload while providing effective services in the community system of care to families in crisis.
- Fourth, the bill ensures that all of DCF's partners are held to the **same standards, processes, and outcome measurements**.
 - Some sheriffs take on the work of investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect, but current Florida law does not require the same degree of transparency from sheriffs than from other DCF contractors.
 - The bill revises the law to ensure that no matter who does child protective investigations – DCF or sheriffs – they will be done in similar ways, and overall results will be known by the public.

Please refer to the bill text and staff analysis for further information.